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William Eagle Feather Hears of the Death of John Sprockett, 1876

by Robert Cooperman

We always feared he'd repent
of saving us: first,
from her husband,
then from the posse
that would've hung us,
since someone had to pay
for the crow-coat's death.

Now, we can breathe easy,
though I grieve the man,
his soul troubled as rivers
raging down from the peaks.
He was a thunder-god of death
filled with scorpion juice.

The wind-imp hisses
a woman stole his soul
when she returned
to her own people,
and he allowed himself
to be gunned down from ambush.
I can't think any woman
delighted in his scarred face.
But Hair Filled With Sun laughs,
"Scars disappear to eyes in love."

Maybe he'll meet that thief-woman
in the Land of Plentiful Game,
will forgive her for pouring
ashes onto his heart; and they —
like Hair Filled With Sun and me —
will dance in the mountains forever.

